

## Driving Creek Railway

– 380 Driving Creek Railway Road, Coromandel

Linda Watson

*This trip took place on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020, the first day of a weekend on the Coromandel Peninsula for the Rotorua Botanical Society. The trip was led by Elaine Iddon & Kerry Jones.*

*The second day trip, to Matarangi Bluff Scenic Reserve, was reported in Newsletter No. 75, December 2020.*

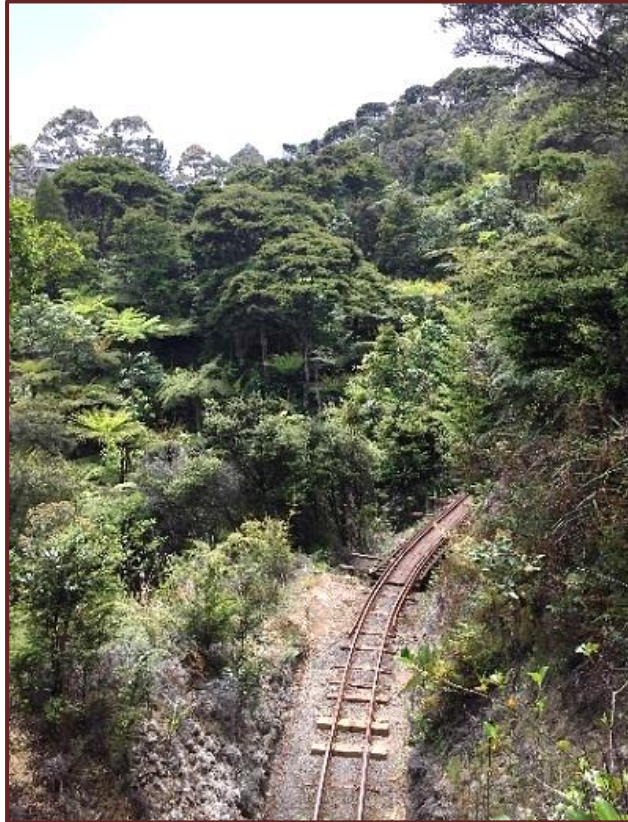
The train was leaving at 10.30 am. A group of 20 keen botanists from Waikato and Rotorua Botanical Societies were ready to board. We knew our trip was only one way as from the EyeFull Tower we were walking back through the bush reserve botanising and compiling a species list. Kate James and Saskia were there to guide us on the day.

The narrow-gauge Driving Creek Railway climbs 2.7km from Base Station (55 metres above sea level) to EyeFull Tower (167 metres above sea level), a total climb of 115 metres. It was a wonderful way to get an overview of the reserve and bush, not to mention the amazing views of Coromandel and beyond. Reaching the highest point, we disembarked, and our train driver enlightened us with a little of the history of Driving Creek.

In 1973 Barry Brickell O.B.E, (the very well-known New Zealand potter, writer and conservationist) purchased 60 acres of land paying a sum of \$8000. There was virtually nothing growing on the land apart from pine trees and assorted scrub consisting mainly of kanuka.

The railway began as a need to obtain clay from the land which Barry used for his pottery. As the railway grew so did the interest in tourists and in 1990 the railway was opened to the public.

Barry had a keen interest in native trees and over the years planted 27,000 trees, 9000 of which were kauri (*Agathis australis*). The pine trees were poisoned, cut down and used to fire the kilns. Some of the pines still in existence have proved useful to build the new adventure zip line.



*Photos:*

*Top left – our arrival at the top of the track and Eyefull Tower; Top right – looking down from the tower onto the narrow-gauge railway track;*

*Left – the main vegetation types in the regenerating bush.*

The canopy consisted of kauri (*Agathis australis*), rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), tanekaha (*Phyllocladus trichomanoides*), rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) in flower, kanuka (*Kunzea robusta*) and manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) in flower. Tree ferns, *Pseudopanax arboreus*, *P. lessonii*, *P. crassifolius*, *Olearia* and *Coprosma* species were predominant under the canopy.

Of note were some nice examples of *Brachyglottis myrianthos* growing in the understory. (Photo, right.)



Another find was what I thought was an endangered native *Hibiscus richardsonii* (photo, left) but may be *H. trionum*, which occurs occasionally in northern parts of New Zealand. I found a beautiful example

growing in a little narrow space by the Eyefull Tower. Hopefully the plant we have put in our endangered garden will do as well.

Thanks go to Elaine Iddon who organised the trip for us and Kerry Jones and Liz Overdyke who compiled the species list (with a little help from some botanical friends).

We wandered down the railway and bush tracks savouring the regenerating bush dotted with ceramic sculptures created by Barry Brickell.

We were so lucky the rain held off and our guides were able to take us through the recently opened new bush track where king ferns and parataniwha were growing.



Waikato and Rotorua Botanical Society members at the Eyefull Tower, Driving Creek Railway, Coromandel.

Photography by Linda Watson and Elaine Iddon.

## Driving Creek species list

Kerry Jones, Liz Overdyke

\* = Exotic

### Plant Type

Gymnosperms:

### Scientific Name

*Agathis australis*

\* *Cupressus macrocarpa*

*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*

*Dacrydium cupressinum*

*Phyllocladus trichomanoides*

\* *Pinus radiata*

*Podocarpus totara*

*Prumnopitys ferruginea*

*Prumnopitys taxifolia*

### Common Name

kauri

macrocarpa

kahikatea

rimu

tanekaha

radiata pine

totara

miro

matai

Monocot Trees / Shrubs:

*Cordyline australis*

*Cordyline banksii*

*Cordyline pumilio*

*Phormium tenax*

*Rhopalostylis sapida*

cabbage tree

cabbage tree

dwarf cabbage tree

flax, harakeke

nikau

Dicot Trees / Shrubs:

<i>Aristotelia serrata</i>	wineberry, makomako
<i>Beilschmiedia tarairi</i>	taraire
<i>Beilschmiedia tawa</i>	tawa
<i>Brachyglottis kirkii</i> var. <i>angustior</i>	Kirk's tree daisy
<i>Brachyglottis repanda</i>	rangiora
<i>Carpodetus serratus</i>	putaputaweta
<i>Coprosma arborea</i>	
<i>Coprosma grandifolia</i>	kanono
<i>Coprosma lucida</i>	
<i>Coprosma macrocarpa</i>	
<i>Coprosma rhamnoides</i>	
<i>Coprosma robusta</i>	karamu
<i>Coriaria arborea</i>	tutu
<i>Corynocarpus laevigatus</i>	karaka
<i>Dodonea viscosa</i>	akeake
<i>Dysoxylum spectabile</i>	kohekohe
* <i>Elaeagnus x reflexa</i>	elaegnus
<i>Fuchsia excorticata</i>	tree fuchsia
<i>Geniostoma ligustrifolium</i> var. <i>ligustrifolium</i>	hangehange
<i>Hedycarya arborea</i>	porokaiwhiri, pigeonwood
* <i>Homalanthus populifolius</i>	Queensland poplar
<i>Knightia excelsa</i>	rewarewa
<i>Kunzea robusta</i>	kānuka
<i>Laurelia novae-zelandiae</i>	pukatea
<i>Leptospermum scoparium</i>	mānuka
<i>Leucopogon fasciculatus</i>	soft mingimingi
* <i>Ligustrum lucidum</i>	tree privet
<i>Mida salicifolia</i>	
<i>Myrsine australis</i>	mapau
<i>Myrsine salicina</i>	toro
<i>Nestegis cunninghamii</i>	black maire
<i>Olearia albida</i>	
<i>Olearia furfuracea</i>	akepiro
<i>Olearia rani</i>	heketara
<i>Pittosporum eugenioides</i>	
<i>Pittosporum tenuifolium</i>	
<i>Pittosporum huttonianum</i>	
<i>Pomaderris kumeraho</i>	kumerahou
* <i>Prunus</i> sp.	cherry
<i>Pseudopanax arboreus</i>	five-finger, whauwhaupaku
<i>Pseudopanax crassifolius</i>	lancewood
<i>Pseudopanax lessonii</i>	houpara
<i>Quintinia serrata</i>	
<i>Schefflera digitata</i>	pate

	<i>Solanum mauritianum</i>	woolly nightshade
	<i>Sophora chathamica</i>	kowhai
	<i>Sophora</i> sp.	kowhai
	<i>Syzygium maire</i>	swamp maire, maire tawake
	<i>Toronia toru</i>	toro
	* <i>Ulex europaeus</i>	gorse
	<i>Veronica stricta</i>	koromiko
	<i>Weinmannia silvicola</i>	towai
Monocot Lianes:	<i>Freycinetia banksii</i>	kiekie
	<i>Ripogonum scandens</i>	supplejack, kareao
	* <i>Asparagus scandens</i>	climbing asparagus
Dicot Lianes:	<i>Clematis paniculata</i>	
	* <i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy
	<i>Metrosideros diffusa</i>	
	<i>Metrosideros fulgens</i>	
	<i>Metrosideros perforata</i>	
	* <i>Passiflora edulis</i>	passionfruit
	<i>Passiflora tetrandra</i>	
	<i>Rubus cissoides</i>	bush lawyer
	* <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	blackberry
Psilopsids, Lycopods and Quillworts:	<i>Lycopodiella cernua</i>	
	<i>Lycopodium deuterodensum</i>	
	<i>Lycopodium volubile</i>	
	<i>Phlegmariurus varius</i>	
	* <i>Selaginella kraussiana</i>	selaginella
	<i>Tmesipteris tannensis</i>	
Ferns:	<i>Asplenium flaccidum</i>	
	<i>Asplenium oblongifolium</i>	
	<i>Blechnum fraseri</i>	
	<i>Blechnum novae-zelandiae</i>	kiokio
	<i>Cyathea dealbata</i>	silver fern, ponga
	<i>Cyathea medullaris</i>	mamaku
	<i>Dicksonia squarrosa</i>	wheki
	<i>Doodia australis</i>	
	<i>Lygodium articulatum</i>	mangemange
	<i>Microsorium pustulatum</i>	hound's tongue
	<i>Paesia scaberula</i>	ring fern
	<i>Pneumatopteris pennigera</i>	gully fern
	<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>	bracken
	<i>Ptisana salicina</i>	king fern
	<i>Pyrrhosia elaeagnifolia</i>	leather-leaf fern, pyrrhosia

Orchids:	<i>Earina mucronata</i> <i>Pterostylis banksia</i> <i>Thelymitra</i> sp.	
Sedges:	<i>Gahnia setifolia</i> <i>Uncinia uncinata</i>	
Grasses:	* <i>Entolasia marginata</i> <i>Microlaena stipoides</i> <i>Oplismenus hirtellus</i> subsp. <i>imbecillis</i>	bordered panic grass
Monocot herbs:	* <i>Allium triquetrum</i> * <i>Aristea ecklonii</i> <i>Arthropodium cirratum</i> <i>Astelia fragrans</i> <i>Astelia hastata</i>  <i>Dianella nigra</i> * <i>Hedychium gardnerianum</i> * <i>Lilium formosanum</i>	onion weed rengarenga  turutu, New Zealand blueberry Kahili ginger Formosan lily
Dicot herbs:	* <i>Ageratina adenophora</i> <i>Callitriche muelleri</i> <i>Centella uniflora</i> * <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> <i>Drosera auriculata</i> <i>Elatostema rugosum</i>  * <i>Erigeron sumatrensis</i> ? <i>Hibiscus trionum</i> * <i>Hypochaeris radicata</i> * <i>Leontodon taraxicoides</i> <i>Lobelia anceps</i> * <i>Lotus pedunculatus</i> <i>Nertera depressa</i> <i>Nertera dichondrifolia</i> * <i>Pseudognaphalium</i> sp. * <i>Senecio bipinnatisectus</i> * <i>Senecio wairauensis</i> * <i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Mexican devil   sundew parataniwha broad-leaved fleabane hibiscus  lotus  cudweed Australian fireweed